Issue 7
Summer 2018

Newsletter

Welcome to the latest issue of the Surrey Dormouse Group Newsletter!

Summer's well under way, the excitement of the World Cup and Wimbledon is over, and it's too hot to do anything strenuous. Time to get a cold drink, find a patch of shade and read the latest news from Surrey Dormouse Group. This issue has mitigation as a theme, with two articles looking at mitigation work in Surrey.

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How did the Hindhead roadworks affect dormice?

A summary of the final dormouse monitoring report prepared by RPS Planning and Development in 2015, following the work to build the Hindhead tunnel

Surrey Dormouse Group are taking on monitoring sites near Hindhead, that were established as part of the mitigation work for the Hindhead tunnel. RPS Planning and Development, the consultants who carried out the five year aftercare monitoring, have kindly shared their dormouse monitoring report from the last year of monitoring visits they undertook, in 2015. This article summarises the key findings from that report.

RPS carried out dormouse surveys in May, July and September 2015 following standard guidelines for monitoring nest boxes. In total, 153 boxes were checked; 51 in Boundless Copse, 61 in Tyndall's Wood and 41 in Blackhanger. The monitoring recorded dormice occupying 10 nest boxes in Boundless Copse and Blackhanger and 10 boxes in Tyndall's Wood. Breeding was confirmed in Boundless Copse and Tyndall's Wood and suspected, but not confirmed, in Blackhanger.

Evaluation of data over the duration of the scheme for each woodland would appear to suggest that the total number of dormice recorded, the total number of boxes occupied by dormice and the average number of dormice recorded per box between 2002 and 2015 has not varied significantly.

The population of dormice seems to be healthy and remains relatively stable. Any significant changes in dormouse numbers are considered to relate to natural seasonal fluctuations rather than any impacts from the scheme. Therefore, it is considered that the mitigation measures implemented for the scheme have been successful and that the A3 Hindhead Scheme has had no negative impacts on the population of dormice within these woods.

The mitigation strategy for dormice also included longer term measures to improve habitats for dormice, including the planting of large areas of broad-leaved woodland and shrub woodland, and an agreement with Forest Enterprise to increase the amount of continuous cover broadleaved woodland within Blackhangar. When the additional planting matures and becomes capable of supporting dormice, the amount of suitable habitat for dormice will be larger than existed prior to the Scheme, and therefore the long-term prospects for Dormice will be enhanced by the mitigation provided by the Scheme.

Any monitoring carried out by Surrey Dormouse Group will allow us to see how the dormice population in these woods fare over the longer term.

Dormouse European Protected Species Development Licences in Surrey, 2009-15

Gareth Matthes has been looking at the Dormice EPS Development Licences in Surrey between 2009-2015

In December 2015 a Freedom of Information Request was made to Natural England to request details of all the Dormouse European Protected Species development licences within Surrey. The dormouse licence numbers were located from the website www.magic.gov.uk and dated from 2009 to 2015. Natural England provided the information requested during January 2016. In total ten sites were subject to licences issued across Surrey during this period. The locations are shown by the pink markers in the map below. The licences are summarised as follows:

GRAYSWOOD (2014-2861-EPS-MIT) - start date 05/08/2014, end date 30/11/2019
Dormouse gnawed nut 01/11/12 (SU914349) re: railway bank stabilisation works

HINDHEAD (EPSM2008-334) - start date 24/04/2009, end date 30/04/2009
See Hindhead article, re: Hindhead Tunnel mitigation report

BEACON HILL (2015-7825-EPS-MIT-1) - start date 24/04/2009, end date 30/04/2009
Juvenile dormouse 25/11/14 (SU87573731) re: South East Water Pipeline

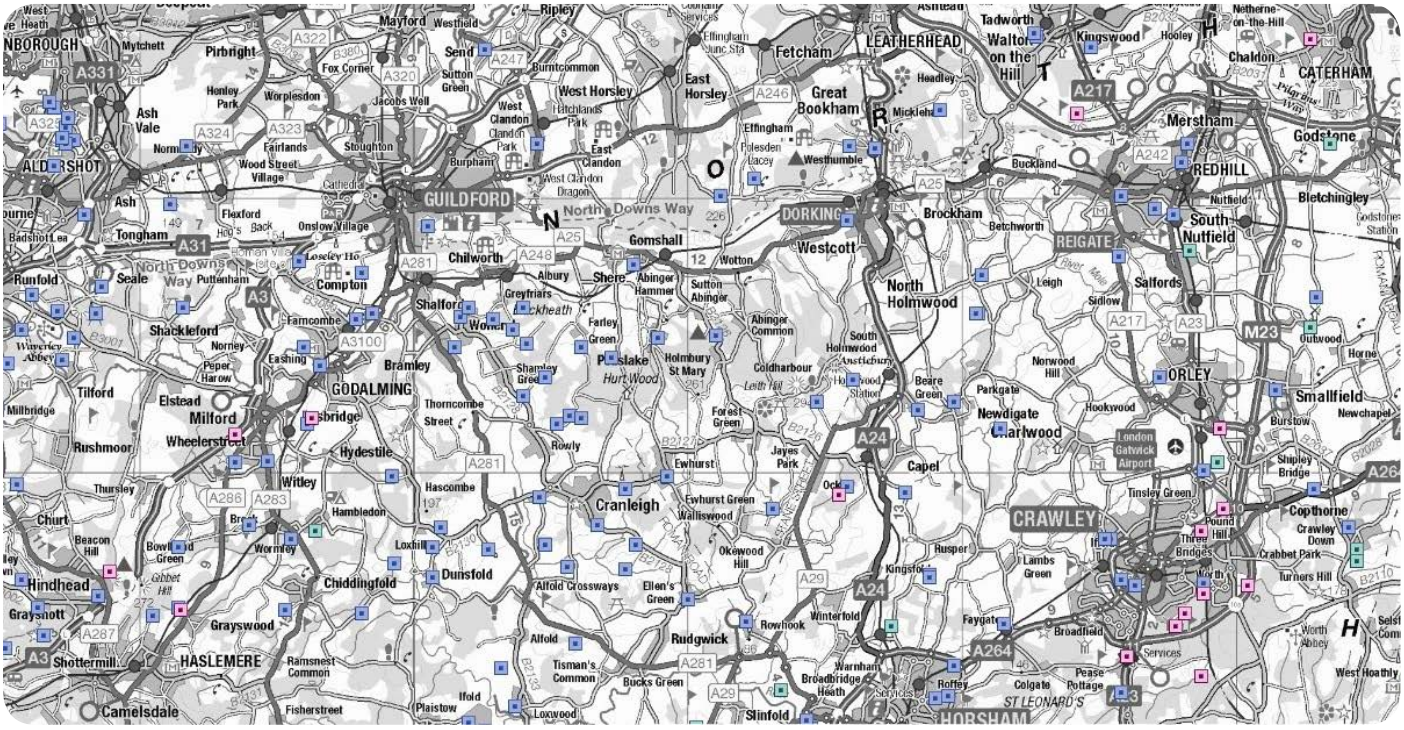
MILFORD (2014-1312-EPS-MIT-2) - start date 05/08/2014, end date 31/01/2017
Dormouse nest in tube, 27/08/12 (SU961418) re: Millford Hospital housing development

WISLEY-HINDHEAD HIGHWAY(EPSM2009-1580) - start 15/01/2010, end 31/12/2011
3 Dormice in tubes, 07/01/11 (SU934413) re: A3 road telecom project

VANN LAKE (EPSM2013-5435) - start date 14/03/2013, end date 30/11/2013
SDG survey site, 07/01/11 (TQ155392) re: Lake spillage / engineering works

DORKING (2015-7958-EPS-MIT) - start date 09/03/2015, end date 30/11/2017
Dormouse gnawed nuts, 22/12/14 (TQ 19074623) re: railway bank stabilisation works

Map showing location of dormice licences in south Surrey, 2009-2015 (dormice=pink markers, bats=blue markers, great crested newts= green markers)



BURGH HEATH (EPSM2011-3250) - start date 01/08/2011 end date 31/03/2015
3 dormouse nests in tubes, Oct 2011 (TQ24055358) re: Sutton and SE Water pipeline

CATERHAM (EPSM2013-5442) - start date 26/02/2013, end date 31/12/2018
2 dormice in tube, 23/06/11 (TQ 326 555) re: Oakfield Hospital housing development

CATERHAM (2014-942-EPS-MIT-2) - Second licence submitted for above development

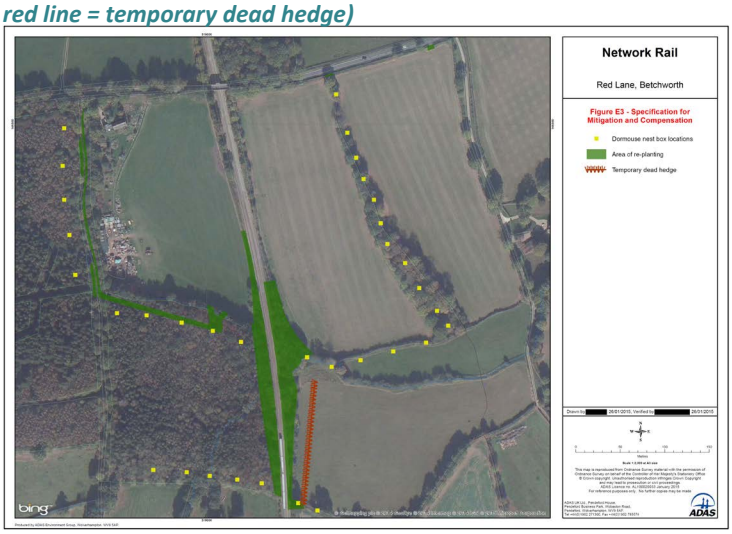
The following were on the County boundary with W. SUSSEX

DORMANS PARK (EPSM2012-4108) - start date 13/02/2012, end date 31/12/2016
Dormouse gnawed nuts, 22/12/11 (Approx. TQ398401) – railway viaduct repair works

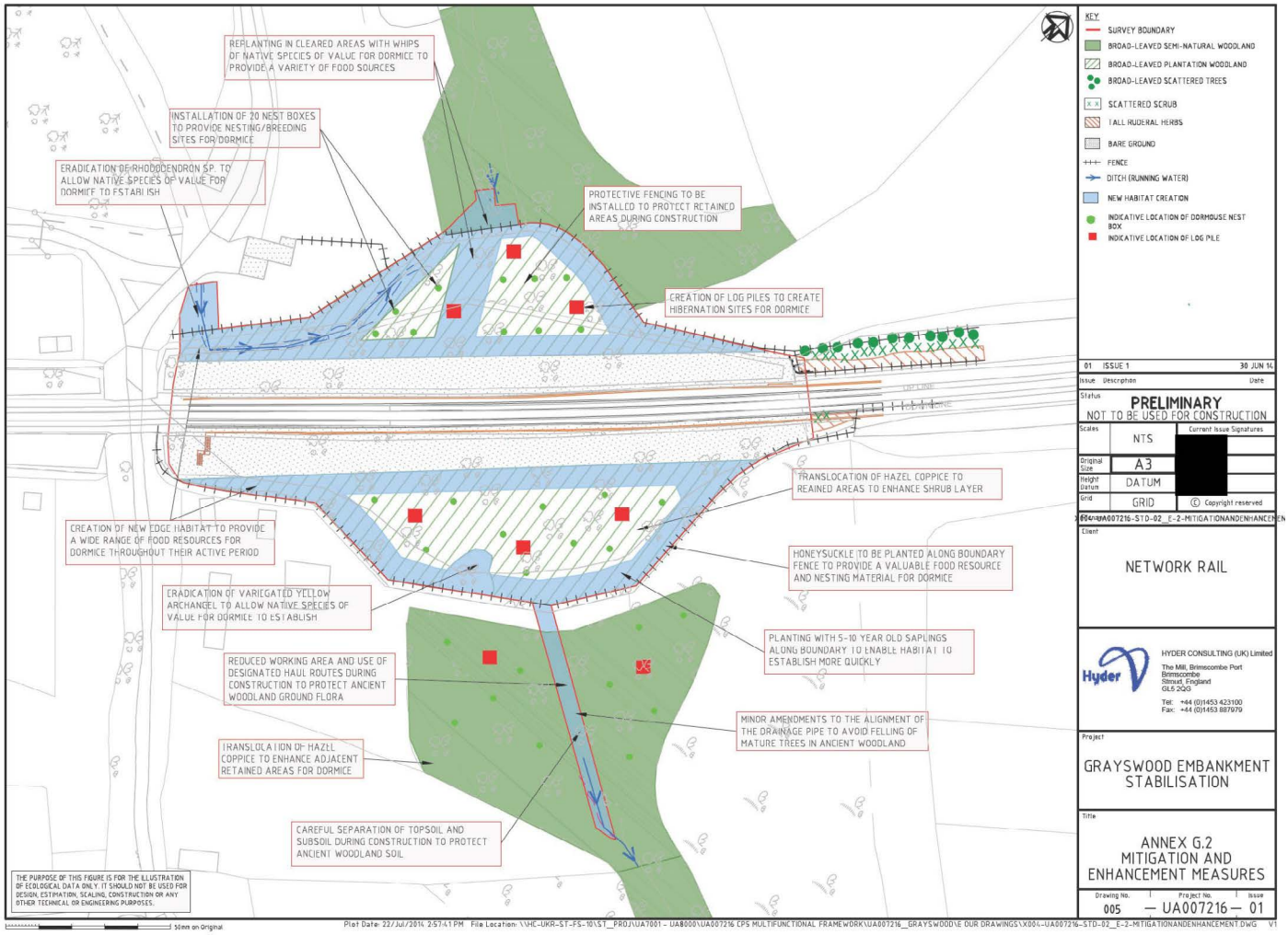
30% (3 of the sites) related to rail maintenance works, 20% (2 sites) to pipeline installation works, 20% (2 sites) to road works, 20% (2 sites) to housing developments and 10% (1 site) to lake engineering works. Follow-up dormouse monitoring appeared to be associated with most of these schemes, though reporting formats differed, therefore information on survey results, mitigation and monitoring varied. Most sites were in south Surrey, although two were north of the M25 (Burgh Heath and Caterham).

Below are mitigation plans from two of the sites.

Mitigation plan for the bank stabilisation work at Dorking (yellow squares = dormouse box, green shaded area = new planting, red line = temporary dead hedge)



Mitigation plan for the bank stabilisation work at Grayswood



Surrey's dormice in 2017

Annabelle South looks at the 2017 data from NDMP sites in Surrey to see how the county's dormice fared

24 sites monitored

212 visits

10,500 boxes checked

1,216 more than 2016

741 dormice found

36 fewer than 2016

1 median number of dormice per 50 boxes

compared to **2** in 2016

3.5 mean number of dormice per 50 boxes

compared to **4.2** in 2016

39% visits without any dormice in 2017

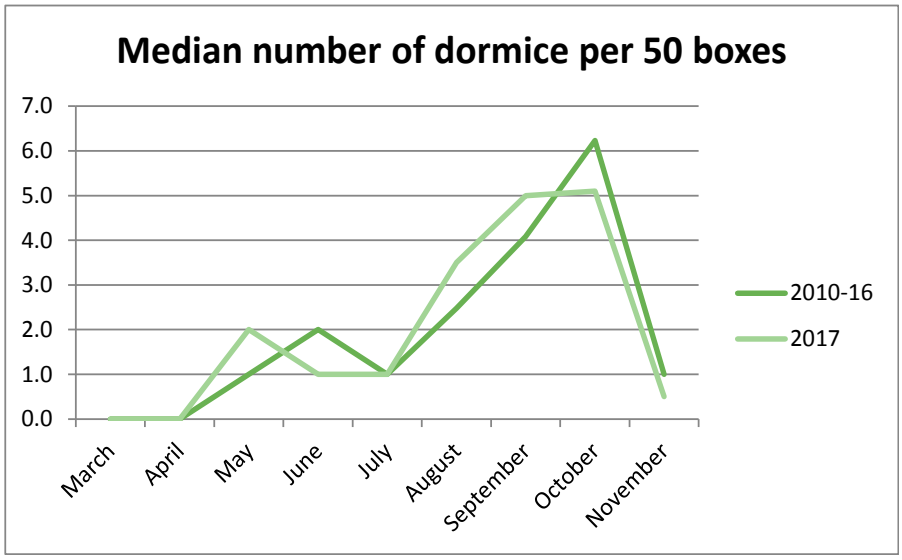
compared to **33%** in 2016

44 highest number of dormice per 50 boxes

compared to **48** in 2016

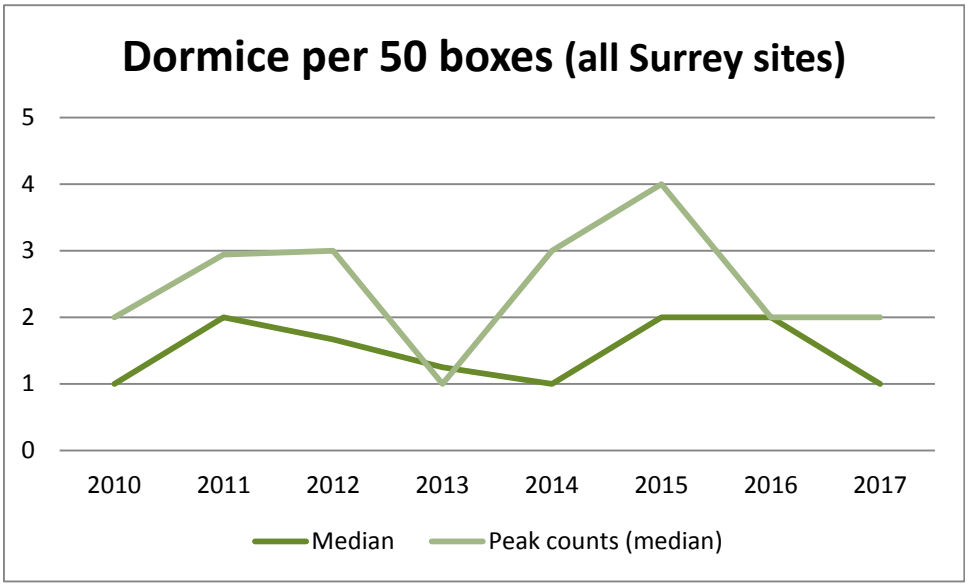
Overall, 2017 was a slightly quieter year for dormice than 2016, with a lower average number of dormice found per 50 boxes, whether you look at median or mean average. This was also reflected in the proportion of visites where no dormice were found, which was up by 6% compared to 2016.

This chart shows the median number of dormice seen per 50 boxes by month, comparing 2017

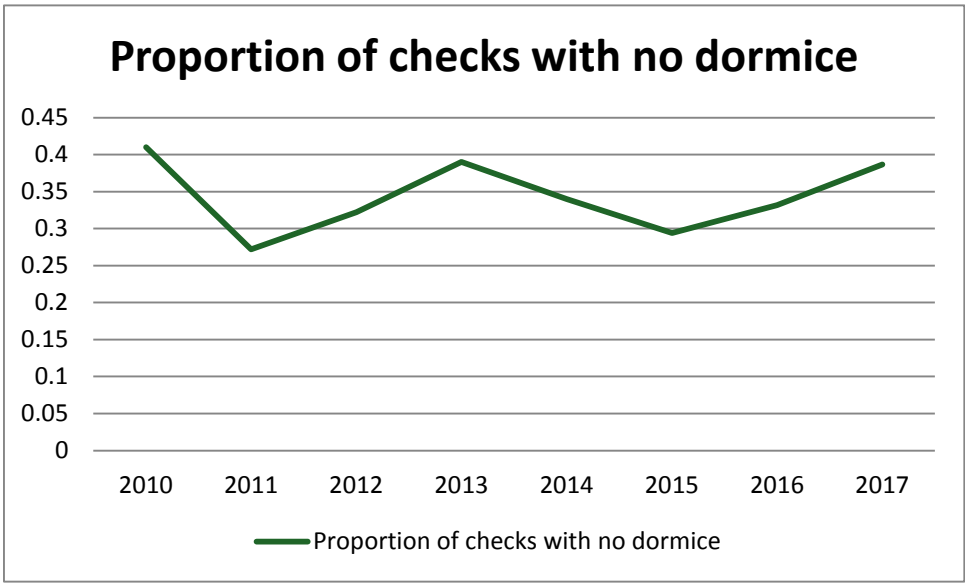


to the average from 2010-2016. Overall numbers for 2017 are pretty similar to average, but it looks like emergence from hibernation and breeding may have started a month earlier in 2017 than 2016.

Looking at trends over time, 2017 seems to have been slightly lower than most years from 2010-2016 in terms of median number of dormice per 50 boxes.



Peak counts are another way of looking at the size of the dormouse population. Peak counts are the highest count of adult dormice per 50 boxes in either May or June for each site. The highest count from site visits in either May or June is taken as an indication of the size of the pre-breeding (adult) population, and avoids this year's young being misclassified as adults. The median peak count in 2017 was 2, which is the same as 2016, lower than most other years between 2010-16.



There was a higher chance of not finding any dormice at a box check in 2017 than most other years from 2010-16, with none found at 39% of checks. Only two sites reported having no checks without finding dormice, but one of those sites was only surveyed in June, August, September, October and November.

2017 wasn't all doom and gloom. Chilworth saw their first dormouse nest in two years in October, and Box Hill 2 found their first dormouse in July.

Other interesting finds include a possible hibernation nest at Netherlands in March, and a pygmy shrew nest with young at Chilworth in June. Quite a few bees and wasps took over dormice boxes, while Polesden Lacey may have the record for highest number of birds nests in dormouse boxes, with 15/50. Most of these were bluetits. The dormice at Polesden Lacey didn't let the previous occupants deter them from nesting, and adapted many of the birds nests after the birds had fledged.

Pygmy shrew
(photo courtesy of Marilyn Holmested)

Ups and downs at Norbury Park

Kathryn Killner introduces us to Norbury Park

Our Norbury Park site is part of a 500 hectare area of farmland, grassland and semi-natural ancient woodland, the majority of it designated as a SSSI. It is managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust on behalf of Surrey County Council.

The monitoring area is predominantly mature hazel coppice with a few large yews and is well connected to the wider woodland. There is some hawthorn, bramble, spindle and plenty of honeysuckle and clematis for nest building, with a carpet of dog's mercury in summer. We like to combine a bit of botany with the dormouse checks and do get a few interesting species popping up from time to time, including helleborines, toothwort and houndstongue.

We carried out two successful nut hunts here in late 2012 and chose one of the two areas to put up 50 boxes in March 2013.

First dormouse at Norbury Park (photo courtesy of Kathryn Killner)

In that year we found our first dormouse in June – very exciting! He had a white tipped tail and so, it turns out, do most of the dormice that we come across at Norbury. We then saw a steady increase month on month, with numbers building until the last check in November, with a record 18 dormice, including a lot of juveniles.

In the second year of monitoring, we again saw an increase in the early part of the season, building up to a couple of litters in August. Things were definitely looking positive.

Then, in the third year, the numbers dropped, we had fewer dormice at each check and then, in 2016, one torpid dormouse in March and nothing again until August, not even a nest. What was going on?

Dormouse with white tail tip (photo courtesy of Kathryn Killner)

The only noticeable difference from previous years was the feeling that the wood had become darker. There is a management plan in place but the particular area where our boxes are has not been coppiced for some years and the hazel is now fruiting high up in the canopy rather than lower down. Maybe our dormice had no reason to come down as far as the boxes, maybe they had moved on into the wider woodland, or had the previous winter taken its toll? Numbers in 2017 stayed low overall but we did find dormice each month, with a couple of litters, so hopefully the majority made it through to this year and will be having young of their own soon.

A surprise find of a summer nest in a hedgerow at the beginning of 2018 proves that dormice are using the wider site as we have always suspected. Fingers crossed some of these will find our boxes in the future. We've seen a few dormice so far in 2018 so far but time will tell—let's hope things are on the up!

Summer nest (photo courtesy of Kathryn Killner)

Dormouse Mitigation Conference 2018

PTES are holding a Dormouse Mitigation Conference on Friday 16th November at the Natural History Museum, London.

The Dormouse Mitigation Conference is a must for anyone involved in dormouse surveying, licencing and mitigation. You will get updates on survey technique, how to plan mitigation strategies and updates to licencing legislation.

Ticket price for one day conference – £145

Early bird discount available until 30th June – £120

https://ptes.org/get-involved/events/conferences/

Useful links

- Surrey Dormouse Group
- Surrey Dormouse Group Facebook group
- PTES training information
- Dormouse monitor
- Wildwood
- British Wildlife Centre

Contact us

info@surreydormousegroup.org.uk

Dormouse training day

The Surrey Dormouse Group are holding their annual Dormouse Training Day on Saturday 18 August 2018 at East Horsley, Surrey.

This is a one-day course to learn all about the dormouse, its life and habitat. It includes survey techniques, nut recognition and other field signs, habitat requirements, dormouse ecology and there is a practical nest box checking session in the afternoon.

It is suitable for all levels of experience and also provides essential training for anyone who wishes to work towards obtaining a dormouse handling licence.

The morning session will be in East Horsley followed by a visit to a nearby woodland in the afternoon for a box check.

Registration is at 9.30am for a 10.00am start, the course finishes at approximately 4.00pm.

The cost is £50 per person for SDG members, £55 per person for non-members.

All training materials, tools for the box check and tea and coffee are provided but please bring your own packed lunch. You will also need suitable clothing and footwear for the woodland box check.

If you wish to join us for the course please email us at: info@surreydormousegroup.org.uk

And finally…

As ever, we'd love to hear what you think of the SDG newsletter, and even better, for you to get involved in the next issue. If you have any photos for the next issue, or would like to write an article, or suggest something we should cover, please email **info@surreydormousegroup.org.uk**

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.

Torpid dormouse (photo courtesy of Annabelle South)